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"WITH MY EAR

TO THE WALL"

This is a true story of an eleven year olds survival of the holocaust in Poland under conditions unique even for that era.

The action takes place in Lwow, Eastern Poland, when one September morning in 1941, normality suddenly turned into a nightmare . . . codes of civilization ceased to apply . . . torture, murder, became tools of the state . . . Jewish citizens were declared subhuman and the total ~~rage~~ MIGHT and fury of the German regime was turned savagely against them.

Developments, unimaginable in fiction a few months earlier, occurred with terrifying swiftness . . . humiliation, brutality and murder in the streets . . . roundup and deportation of great multitudes of people, followed by the removal of the survivors temporarily into a remote part of the city . . . the ghetto.

To escape certain death which was only a question of time . . . I, my Mother, Aunt and Sister managed to smuggle ourselves - on separate occasions - out of the ghetto into a shelter in the Aryan side of the city, provided by a Christian Pole . . . Mrs. Petecka. This was January 1943 . . . We were now ensconced in her house. Such a situation, if discovered by either her neighbors, let alone any authority would result in instant death for all of us as well as Petecka.

PREFACE

The very thin wall separated two worlds . . . it's as if someone lowered a parchment barrier into the water in the midst of a furious sea and calmed the angry tossing and turning on one side and allowed the ~~vicious~~ vicious storm to continue unabated on the other. Yet, it was only a thin wall separating two very ordinary semi-attached suburban houses, a kitchen of one from a bedroom of the other. The wall was so thin that normal speech could be heard clearly, every word very clearly if you pressed your ear against the wall . . . in certain places. You could hear footsteps, hiccups, running water and even a newspaper being turned . . . in the still of the night.

You could always hear good sounds from the kitchen side . . . radio, voices, laughter, footsteps, running water . . . normal sounds of life. In the bedroom side there was always total silence, no sounds, no closing of doors, no footsteps, running water and certainly no coughing.

In the kitchen side (of the wall) the people were concerned daily with the quality of milk and price of meat . . . short supply of coal so that one was forced to search for wood . . . high prices of getting your shoe repairs.

In the bedroom side the sole daily task was complete silence, invisibility, even proof of non-existence to the outside world, and especially to the

people across the non-existent wall. Sheer survival of four people in the bedroom depended on it . .. A terrible danger existed if as much as any suspicion arose in the kitchen that someone was living in the bedroom on the other side of the wall.

It was in Lwow (Poland) in 1943. All visible, traceable Jews known eliminated, as officially no Jews were officially or legally in existence. (Like in most of Poland at that time) - except for a very few like us who were hiding here and there in a gentile's house.

Chapter 1

The unfamiliar steps, slow but determined, approached the door. The door handle moved, he tried to push the door open, but it was locked. He tried again. We froze in the positions from the moment we heard the unfamiliar steps set in the room adjoining ours. He hesitated for a moment and then turned back across the room towards the living room and closed the door . . . or perhaps he pretended to . . . and was still in the next room, listening for any sounds from . . . us. We kept absolutely still, trying to hold back our breaths for a long time . . . then, without a sound tiptoed to the bed. It was Wladek, our "landlady's", Mrs. Petecka's lover who just started staying overnight with her. Where was she? She never let him wander alone and certainly not into the "unused" part of the house since he started visiting her in August of 1943. He clearly must have been curious about the rooms "beyond" and he took the opportunity to find out when Petecka must have gone out for an errand. Now his suspicions will even be even greater because of the locked door beyond the room. It was a disaster, but there was nothing we cold do. We had somehow to talk to Petecka to come to us, but she wouldn't do it while Wladek was there. We didn't know if he was going to stay the night, in which case we couldn't talk to her until tomorrow, or even if we tried to argue in whispers, the desire to talk to her was overpowering. We had nowhere to go and yet it could be fatal if Wladek became suspicious of the truth. My mother suddenly became

agitated that it was all over anyway while my aunt, my sister and myself strained to the limit to think of some possible solution. We hardly had enough money left after paying the biweekly $20 gold piece to Petecka - perhaps we could sign a promise to pay a large sum of money after the war . . . Would he be willing to accept a promise? How committed was he to the Germans? How much did he approve or applaud the activities in Poland?

Petecka was the only immediate hope . . . and we had to wait . . . In any case we couldn't get out of the room, the door was locked and Wladek was there. We sat absolutely still for many hours . . . the clearly audible conversation from the kitchen beyond the wall was in full swing and I tiptoed over to my usual spot in the wall which by now bore the imprint of my ear on the wallpaper. I actually heard the pounding of my heart in the wall . . . it was so loud that for a moment I could hear nothing.

Wladek was nine years junior to Mrs. Petecka, who was 50, handsome and a volksdeutsche (a person of much higher social status than the Poles . . . just one rung lower than the Germans). This was a privilege granted to foreign nationals of German descent and . . . proven loyalties to the Fatherland. A most dangerous person in the extreme . . . to us, if he ever became suspicious of our presence. Every time Wladek would visit, we

knew well in advance and would keep deadly quiet . . . Petecka would generally have the radio on in her living room to help drown any inadvertent sounds just in case. Her bedroom was at the other end of the house. In spite of our extremities that she should try to make his visits as infrequent as possible, and certainly avoid any overnight stays, she fell victim to his handsome looks, her obsession with him and the flattery of being courted by a much younger man proved more persuasive . . . The deadly risk of his finding out about us was somehow less persuasive and he started spending nights in the house with increasing frequency.

The conversation slowly subsided and I waited for the usual noise of the kitchen door being shut . . . The inevitable signal that Mr. Goral was going to bed . . . He was always the last one to go after reading his paper and clearing his throat a couple of times . . . He would never once, to the best of my knowledge, come back to the kitchen after this in the fourteen months that I kept vigil on every sound that came from behind the wall . . . and on this we staked our safety and our lives. We could relax our total silence a little and minimal movements on tiptoes, essential while he or anyone else were in the kitchen. They knew, of course, that Petecka lived alone and the room beyond the wall was a box room to which she would rarely venture.

We tiptoed to the bed as usual and laid down . . . we didn't bother to remove our socks - we never wore any shoes or slippers so as not to make any sounds. I lay down next to my aunt . . . my sister and mother on the opposite side of the bed . . . my sister's legs between my aunt . . . mine in between my mother and my sister . . . the usual routine . . . no sound to be heard from the four of us, as usual.

Could this be the end? After all, why should we be different and not come to the inescapable end? Thousands, tens of thousands had high hopes of survival by their wits, hiding in "good" places, but how many actually managed to stay alive until now? Perhaps a few hundred in Lwow out of over 300,000 when the Germans walked in in September of 1941.

But perhaps he wouldn't jump to any conclusions and think that Petecka might be peculiar and not want him to see something she possessed? I resigned myself to awaiting tomorrow.

The morning was dark, chilly with a steady drizzle. It was Sunday so that activities behind the wall would start much later than usual. I knew exactly by now the chronology of their activities each day. Mr. Goral was always the first to come down and start ferreting with some pots and pans trying to extricate the kettle from among other utensils. This was a constant bone of

contention between him and Mrs. Goral, and he would lose his temper and we would hear him shout on many occasions, "What does it take to have some order among the pots and have the damned kettle handy?" She would answer him with, "God gave you eyes, and hands, so use them!"

So far he had not come down . .. so we cold quickly catch up on the more active chores . . . one by one we would "go" into our bathroom. We could not wash because any running water would be heard in either Mrs. Petecka's area or the Gorals'. There was no flushing of the toilet, of course.

The bathroom was also our ultimate hiding place . .. It came off the bedroom, its door was taken off and a large wardrobe was place in front of the gap. the back panel of the wardrobe was carefully cut so that it could be replaced in its original position from inside the bathroom. The panel was fitted out with two well placed handles on the bathroom side and the job was so well done by Mrs. Petecka's son that when the back panel was in position, no one would suspect that anything was amiss of that there was anything behind it. The wardrobe and its hole were always open so that we could quickly push into the bathroom close the doors of the wardrobe and then quickly close up the back section of the wall. There were several long dresses hanging to the side which we would quickly spread out before

closing the back. Although the Germans became aware of such hiding places, it still provided some immediate safety against casual emergencies. clearly at no time could there be any leftover clothes or anything suggesting the presence of anyone left in our room . . . all our clothes and other belongings were always kept in the bathroom, stacked in separate heaps, available space in the bathroom was small, there was room for four or five to stand closely together when necessary. The bulb was always very weak so the small room was always in semi-darkness. We used the toilet only when absolutely necessary, and of course we couldn't flush it whenever Wladek was in . . . it was particularly noisy and could be heard all over the house and easily in the Gorals' house . . . In fact, Mrs. Petecka would come loudly in our room every couple of days (to be purposely heard next door), singing quite loudly to herself and get into the bathroom and flush the toilet to keep it fresh. As a rule, we always used her toilet in the hallway whenever she was alone. the bathroom hiding place in the bathroom was sin fact the main reason why we always stayed in the bedroom . . . which was also the farthest area from the front of the house, giving us maximum time in case of any unwanted visits or emergencies.

Before we managed to complete our bathroom activities, I heard Mr. Goral walking around the kitchen and pouring water into the kettle . . . our usual total alert and silence began. There was no sound coming from Petecka's

direction and Wladek had clearly stayed the night. Our anxiety, perhaps lessened by sleep and rest, started to swell up again and I felt the familiar tightening of my stomach and pounding of the heart . . . All of us were very pale and in spite of our hunger pangs, we didn't feel like eating the bread and cream cheese which we kept wrapped up in paper on a smaller shelf in the bathroom.

Automatically, I moved to my favorite spot and pressed my left ear to the wall. Mr. Goral was unwrapping some paper. I heard a string cut, more paper unwrapped, he closed a drawer and at that moment Mrs. Goral walked in with a loud yawn . . . "I suppose old Petecka was up to no good last night ," she said. "I didn't see him leave. she should be ashamed of herself, carrying on like a young hussy and with a much younger man! Good looking fellow, I must say." There was no answer from Mr. Goral. "I must be out by the gate when he comes out to talk to him for a bit. I wonder what he does . . . what is he after? It certainly can't be her body . . . He's after her house and money, the stupid old baba!" At that she walked over to the kitchen window which overlooked a part of our front garden and the paved pathway to Petecka's front gate. She had practically the same view as we had through the Muslin curtains in our window. Mr. Goral kept quiet, clearly reading. We were absolutely still. Mrs. Goral was walking about the kitchen with her usual morning chores. They would

normally leave the house at about 8:00 for church and we would utilize that time to move about freely . . . But not today. Wladek was still very much in the house. it was nearing 7:30 when Mrs. Goral suddenly said, "You go to church and I'll come later. I want to keep an eye on what's going on over there with the "fiancee". Mr. Goral made a deprecating sound and with one word, "Oh baby" and left the kitchen to go upstairs for his jacket. he came down the stairs a few minutes later, put his coat on and went out of the door saying . . . "I hope he will not keep you waiting too long and we'll see you in church". Mrs. Goral started moving around the kitchen with pots and pans, going over to the window every now and then.

About a half an hour later, we heard some faint noises of running water and voices from Petecka's quarters . . . Then, sounds of cups and saucers and a quiet conversation. Some time later we heard footsteps outside . . . it was Wladek alone . . . We heard the gate bell tinkling as he walked out. Mrs. Goral completely missed all this as she was busy over the kitchen stove.

Chapter 2

Almost immediately, we heard Petecka's steps in the adjoining room. She unlocked the door and was about to say something when I pointed towards and wall and silenced her. She didn't expect the Goral's to be in at this time on a Sunday morning. We tiptoed out of the room and followed her to the kitchen. She said that Wladek had gone out for about one hour for some chores . . . she certainly did not have the faintest idea of what had happened. we all at once blurted out about the episode . . . Petecka turned very pale, but tried to keep calm. "I'm sure he can't suspect that I'm hiding you. He will probably think that I am hiding something else from him." But as soon as she uttered these words, the same thought came to all of us . . . What? No matter what, if his suspicions were aroused, sooner or later this had to turn into a very dangerous situation. All types of suggestions came out fast and furious: under no circumstances should she disclose to him that she knew he had tried to open "our" door, yet perhaps it might be advisable to broach the subject of the locked door, obliquely. Perhaps suggest she kept some valuables, carpets or silver . . . or even bring him into the room . . . when we'd be in "the bathroom" . . . But there was nothing in the room of any note, so why keep it locked! There was little time left to decide on what to do . . . He was leaving at about four o'clock and so we decided not to do or say anything until we all had time to think . . . We had hardly returned to our room when we heard the front gate bell

tinkle and Wladek let himself into the house. Again, Mrs. Goral did not see him in time, although she ran to the window when he was already walking into the house.

Our brief encounter with Petecka left us drained and very disturbed . . . it was clear that she was worried and very apprehensive and didn't know how to handle him. He left at 4:25. Petecka showed him out and even though Mrs. Goral was aware of his leaving, she did not run out of the house as she saw Petecka. I went to my good spot and put my ear to the wall. Goral was reading Die Limburger Zeiting haltingly translating from German, now and again about the progress of the war . . . Even this official German paper could not camouflage the growing crisis on the Eastern Front . . . "After a heroic stand", he was translating ironically . . . "our forces have moved to better defensive positions, <u>west of Stalingrad</u> . . ." "There's no question this means another one hundred kilometers lost to the Reds in one day and another debacle." But Mrs. Goral wasn't listening as she was watching Wladek's departure. "She will sleep undisturbed tonight," she muttered. But Mr. Goral kept translating the "losses" inflicted on the Red Army adding, "the bigger the Red's losses, the bigger the real debacle and it looks like a real disaster there this time." He suddenly whistled and read out, "one thousand British and American bombers attack civilian areas in Kolonia (Koln) and Hamburg - terror bombing of innocent civilian centers

continues without break." "The allies are breaking their bones, by the looks of it", to which Mrs. Goral said, now back from the window, "Still many of them are innocent women and children." this was a typical exchange on the politics of these two. Mr. Goral was more militant and usually welcomed news of German defeats in the East and bombing of Germany . . . Mrs. Goral was apprehensive of Russian victories and not so keen on news of bombing. They were both adamantly anti-German as the Russian front moved closer. Even though there were four of us now, there were actually five of us here less than six weeks earlier. It all started at the end of November 1942.

"The Russians are bleeding like from a tap for every kilometer," said Mr. Goral. "The more of them that perish, the better for us," answered Mrs. Goral. "Let them kill each other and leave us in peace. I still think it's terrible about those innocent women and children in Hamburg."

"What about our own 'neighbors', women and children? Right, they were Jewesses and Jew kids, but they didn't have to finish them off like that . . . it just wasn't right . . . and in front of our eyes . . . Couldn't they have done it at night, quietly or something . . .all right, I understand the men, but women and children?"

"I don't understand you," Mrs. Goral answered. " I don't know what gets into you. You always said that this was the best thing that could have happened to Poland. that we couldn't have ever done it and at last it's done . . . And now all of a sudden, you're crying for the fat Jewesses and their litter. Why don't you go out and maybe find a couple and hide them? And get a medal after the war, although I don't know from whom." With this, Mrs. Goral walked out of the kitchen . . . Mr. Goral continued quietly, clearly reading.

We heard the door unlocking softly and Mrs. Petecka stood in the doorway and motioned us out of the room and into her living room, closing all doors quietly behind us.

"There's no way he's going to do anything to me because he's in love with me and he doesn't know anything anyway. What could he gain by denouncing me? You have nothing to worry about. I always carry the key on my neck and when in bed, under the pillow. He'll never find out, but you must always be absolutely quiet whenever he's around and especially with water in the bathroom. So far, I haven't heard a sound from you when we sit in the living room and certainly nothing in the bedroom."

Slowly, hope and reason started filtering back into our minds. He must certainly suspect something, but maybe she could engineer to bring him into our room and simply show him around casually - when we'd be in the hidden bathroom . . . But what reason could she have for locking the door inside the house? She would have to have something that she didn't want her son and daughter-in-law to see. Suddenly, my Aunt said, "Why couldn't you have some Jewish silver that you "found" in an abandoned house in a big basket. We'll put it in the room . . . and you'll show it to him in confidence . . . We'll put all kinds of heavy items, pots and pans on the bottom and some candlesticks and other silver-looking items on the top. Just show him how heavy it is . . . all very casually, while you're simply showing him around. And mention that you certainly don't want Wojtek (Petecka's son) and Lola (daughter-in-law) to know . . . so you don't have to share it . . ."

We suddenly felt better as the plan made sense. Hopefully, he wouldn't do anything in the meantime . . . It was possible, although the uncovering of hidden Jews was a frequent and greatly publicized occurrence and quickly spread all over town. There were announcements on walls of buildings in the areas in question, by police vans through loudspeakers, by word of mouth . . . About four blocks from us three days earlier, a man and two teenage daughters were dragged out by Ukrainian police and SS men . . .

The man was put against the wall and shot . . . The women badly beaten and put away in the police van . . . and then the elderly couple who hid them brutally beaten in the street and then shot next to the man. The neighbors were called out from several houses to watch the result of hiding Jews. Mrs. Petecka gave us all the details . . . I also heard a somewhat different version of the background of this incident through the wall . . .The same day it happened. (X-Later)

We decided that the plan must be carried out on the second day of his weekend stay . . . She expected him Saturday afternoon and she would show him around late Sunday afternoon after 4:00pm, just before he was to leave. We'd be in the bathroom, behind the cupboard, at 3:00 to give Mrs. Petecka freedom of choice . . . We would have to put together a large straw basket . . . She had some old tools in the cellar, one very heavy hammer, the bottoms of a couple of shovels, other tools, lots of newspapers . . . and on top we'd put a shiny tray which looked like silver. She had a couple of candlesticks which would be highly polished. She would also let her son and daughter in on this plan and get them to bring some silver, all of which would be put on top, with some newspapers partially wrapping some of the items. In other words, a real silver hoard!

She would casually say to Wladek, "You haven't seen the rest of the house", then unlock the door, take him in to our room, casually point out the silver hoard, open it and say that she certainly didn't want Lola and Wojtek to wander in and see it as it really was for her old age insurance. She would casually open and look into our "wardrobe" and speak loudly all the time so that the Gorals could hear both Wladek's and her voices . . . an excellent new "alibi" for the Gorals at the same time. It sounded good and we had a whole week to think about the details.

We had our supper - potato soup, bread with sardines and tea in glasses with handles. Wladek had brought some tea biscuits in a tin and we had one each . . . although, I must admit, I was dying to have a few more!

We used Mrs. Petecka's bathroom to wash and tiptoed back into our room. I went over to the spot by the wall and listened. There were no sounds . . . I continued to listen and suddenly heard rustling of a newspaper page being turned over and nothing more. Mr. Goral was inevitably reading the paper while Mrs. Goral was clearly upstairs. I signaled towards the bed to be very quiet. I was glued to the wall. Some forty minutes passed when there was a loud noise of a chair being pushed backwards, footsteps and the usual closing of the door. I listened for a few more minutes. There was no more sound. The coast was clear for some whispered discussion.

[XX] PETECKA'S COURAGE

I always slept closest to the wall so that if I was awoken during the night, I could put my ear to the wall at once. We tried to get up always before Mr. Goral came down, which was at 6:45 in the morning so that we could move around a little, even though with stocking feet and on tiptoes.

We would also go into Petecka's bathroom to wash before she would get up. But we would not flush the toilet more than once because so early in the morning this could be possibly heard by the Gorals, and too many toilet flushings could attract attention.

Chapter 2

Tomorrow was the end of the month and time for the second monthly payment of a $20 gold piece to Mrs. Petecka. Although we trusted her, we did not feel secure enough to tell her that we had all the money on us.

It was my Aunt Lusia's turn to sneak out of the house in the dead of the night . . . normally around 11:00 when usually everybody was in their house in the neighborhood to pretend to get money from a "secret place". The procedure was always the same as on that night. My Aunt would go out of the house as quietly as possible, tiptoe to the gate, open and close it very gently to avoid rattling of the bell, turn left to the corner, left again up the fairly long block, right into the main road and walk on for about thirty-five minutes and then turn back and return the same way back to the house. It was a harrowing experience for each of us in turn . . . every time. It was a terrifying thought that we might be stopped by a policeman to check papers or even worse be recognized by someone who knew us.

We knew of so many instances of Jews being denounced in the streets by former acquaintances or friends outside the Ghetto, even before its destruction . . .

Edek Rosenstreich was two years my senior and lived with his parents in the house next door to us in the Ghetto. One day in November of 1942 he was sent out by his parents with a package of diamonds, silver and gold coins to deposit for safety with their non-Jewish friends on 2yGmuntowska Street. both Mr. and Mrs. Rosenstreich were delirious with fright as the chances of smuggling a person in and out through the Ghetto gates were bad enough, but an even more terrifying prospect was traversing the city in daylight with the possibility of being stopped by a policeman or being recognized by someone.

Edek managed to get through the gates. Both of the Ukrainian policemen were bribed previously by a contact man with silver coins and a firm promise of more to come on Edek's safe return at a given pre-arranged time. He never came back. We found out a week later from a broken Mrs. Rosenstreich. Edek reached the building at 2yGmuntowska Street to be taken away by German and Polish police less than half an hour later from the "friend's" house - the policemen loudly proclaiming to the crowd gathered outside that the "Jew" had forced his way to the apartment and asked for shelter. They praised the loyalty of the Polish family to the New Order and jeered at the "Jew's" protestations that he had given them money and gold to keep. There was no trace of any money . . . Edek was badly

beaten and bloodied and was dragged away screaming . . . "They took my money and betrayed me".

One of the people who saw all this knew Edek and the Rosenstreichs well and passed on the information via an acquaintance who came in and out of the Ghetto frequently. It was later confirmed by a man who spent his last night with Edek in the same police cell and who survived and was allowed to return to the Ghetto. Edek was shot the next morning. We heard of several such episodes about other acquaintances and closer friends in the course of the next few months . . . some through the wall.

We always waited in total terror for whoever's turn it was to come back from the mission. This time it was my Aunt. The risks were incalculable. If some mishap were to occur and my Aunt or any of us would be uncovered in the street, they would inevitably extract our address . . . Prior to the extinction of the Ghetto, one could claim that "I just ran away from the Ghetto," and generally this could work. After the elimination of the Ghetto, however, they were adamant to find all hiding places outside the Ghetto and anyone caught outside was tortured until the truth came out. We had no illusion that none of us would stand up to prolonged beatings and the kind of diabolic torture that was known to be meted out by the German and Ukranian police. Yet, we had to weigh this against the risk of letting

Petecka know that we had all our Gold coins with us in the room. The temptation of getting the Gold in one swoop would have to be very strong, particularly as all risks of being found out to hide Jews (and certain death which would follow) would be eliminated. All she would have to do - as has happened many times - was to call the police and claim that Jews had just forced their way into her house and are asking for shelter. The Schutzpolizei or the Urkranian police never asked too many questions under such circumstances and simply would drag away the Jews for brief and bloody interrogation and execution within a few hours. This very fate met my school friend Bronka Feinberg and her family who ran away from the Ghetto in September of 1942. Mr Feinberg, a respected doctor, was proud of his collection of Gold Russian Dukats, large thin coins from Tsarist Russia. He told my father that he had arranged with reliable friends of long standing on Jagielonska Street to hide himself, his wife and Bronka with them for four of those coins per month. He said he trusted them to such an extent that he gave them enough money for a whole year and then he had more hidden away. He thought their apartment which was on the ground floor was a good place to hide, as there were no children in their family and there were lots of Germans living in the house which certainly added respectability and a sense of security to the building. First Bronka left the Ghetto, then Mrs. Feinberg and then, a few days later, Mr. Feinberg. The way of leaving was through a contact who bribed the policemen at the gate

with large sums of money and who looked the other way, in the dead of the night, when the right "candidate" approached the gates. We did not hear from them again until my father saw Mr. Feinberg in the Janowski concentration camp in December of 1942. he was saved from execution by virtue of being a doctor. They were needed as token functionaries in the concentration camp. He told his story in drips and drabs . . . The family were all placed in a small room in the apartment and both hosts were friendly at first, although they all noticed distancing and grater formality than in prior years. They were given reasonable amounts of food and hoped that with luck they might survive a year or two - perhaps until liberation. The husband and wife hosts gradually became, however, more distant and conversation between them and the Feinbergs eventually diminished to basic and brief exchanges of greetings and little else . . . The earlier chats about news from the Russian Front and the activities of the AK, the Polish underground Army, ceased completely.

One early evening less than a month later the landlady of the house suddenly asked them to pack up all their belongings and be ready to transfer to her cousins apartment on the second floor of the building.
She said they would be much safer there. The apartment was larger and more comfortable. The Feinbergs, totally stunned, had no alternative but to comply although they were highly apprehensive and very worried about

moving out and into a completely unknown destination with a person they had never met. Mrs. Feinberg requested that they should at least meet the cousin, but the woman firmly refused, stating that it had all been arranged but that she needed immediately six months additional advance money for the cousin - the almost five months pay already in their possession will be transferred so that the Feinbergs would have nearly eleven months paid up "rent". Without any alternative, Mr. Feinberg produced the required twenty-four Dukats. He was now left with some thirty coins. She took the coins, placed them in a jar and put the jar away in the kitchen. She then asked the Feinbergs to wait in the hallway close to the door so that they could transfer quickly to the cousin's flat one by one when the staircase would be clear and safe. She waited by the door as if listening for any movements up and down the stairs.

They stood for about twenty minutes, each with small suitcases. Suddenly they heard a number of people coming loudly up the stairs and banging loudly on the door. "Open up - Police!" She immediately opened the door, stood to the side and pointing to the Feinbergs said, "Here they are." Mr. Feinberg, telling my father all this in detail over and over again, said that even then he could not comprehend what was occurring. He soon knew what had transpired when he saw several German policemen in different uniforms, two with revolvers in their hands, burst into the hallway. Their

erstwhile landlord was close behind but stayed on the staircase . . . that was the last time they saw their pre-war friends who refused to look at them as they were ordered to get out at once. Outside the building a small crowd watched the group climb into the small van, the Feinbergs to the back with the two policemen with guns. Mr. Feinberg heard a woman in the small crowd remark, "Imagine, these Jews can force their way into a respectable house like this and endanger all our lives . . . Good riddance, Thank God!" The Feinbergs were separated at the Police Station. Mrs. Feinberg and Bronka were led away in a different direction. Mr. Feinberg was then taken to a small cell and severely beaten with butts of guns by two SS men in shirt sleeves. They wanted to know where they came from, who they were; they seemed to be interested in the fact that he was a doctor, but did not believe his story that they had stayed for nearly a month at the flat. They screamed again and again that the Poles did their duty in reporting dirty Jews trying to force their way into their apartment. Mr. Feinberg remembered waking up in terrible pain the next morning, being dragged out onto the courtyard and into the same van . . . On a small patch of grass just by the van he saw three corpses . . . a man, next to his wife and Bronka . .. He must have passed out as the next thing he remembered was waking up in a strange barracks packed with people in the middle of the night . . . The Janowski Concentration Camp.

My father told us this story over and over again. Feinberg was shot some three weeks later by a woman SS officer using prisoners for shooting practice during roll call, from a second floor window of the camp commandants' Wilhouse Building. Feinberg was obsessed with the betrayal, incessantly talked about it, and was anxious for my father and others to know and remember all the details, however mundane. he gave the name of his "friends" to my father and others.

So it was decided that we would pretend to Petecka that the money was available elsewhere and we would have to extricate it in small amounts every month. She had tried to persuade us on many occasions to try and get it all. We often wondered whether this was dictated by her motives of safety for us and herself, or whether there were more sinister motives . . . (Re Feinberg's story).

We waited with terrible anxiety for Lusia to come back from her "errand". The wait was always a terrifying experience . . . Would someone see her? Would a policeman accost her? We often talked about what was more wrenching, the walk itself or the unending waiting for the one to return? The relief when finally Lusia came back was euphoric. It was always the same . . . It was as if an irrevocable death sentence had suddenly been lifted . . . and a new lease on life granted. But it lasted only a few minutes.

Even though we were constantly in grave danger, there were frequent new immediate grave situations which had to be faced immediately and solved there and then. The elation at solving these was only momentary as the "other" continuous, heavy, dark and ever-present reality crept back into our consciousness. Even though we "won" this encounter, there was a constant and everlasting feeling of a suffocating load tumbling down on us. It was as if we were slowly sliding down a steep and slippery incline into an abyss, but we would try at all costs to avoid (in our slide) a protruding stone here and there with nasty, razor-sharp edges.

Chapter 3